

Many young people do not possess the appropriate fundamental skills required by employers; the unemployment rate among the 15-19 age group in the past several years has often been twice the provincial average.

To assist students in the acquisition of the necessary skills, the Linkage project was introduced in secondary schools. Linkage makes skills training more attractive by enabling students to receive training credits towards certification in a skilled occupation while a secondary school student.

To understand the importance of Linkage, it is necessary to understand the traditional route to certification in a skilled occupation.

Under the apprenticeship system, a young person must become employed and register as an apprentice with the Apprenticeship Branch of the Ministry of Colleges and Universities. He or she spends three to five years as an apprentice, learning on the job and at a College of Applied Arts and Technology (CAAT). Apprenticeship Model 'A' is a graphic representation of the training in the General machinist's occupation, showing the three in-college terms - Basic, Intermediate and Advanced.

High school graduates have generally been required to take the Basic in-school training at a CAAT as part of the apprenticeship training.

Under the Linkage project, the Basic training in-school portion is taught in the secondary school and need not be repeated during the apprenticeship

period. A graphic representation of Linkage is shown as Apprenticeship Model 'B'.

At present, Linkage is available in nine occupations: motor vehicle mechanic, baker, cook, retail meat cutter, industrial millwright, construction millwright, general machinist, hairstylist and major appliance service technician. Others will be added later.

Linkage offers several advantages to students.

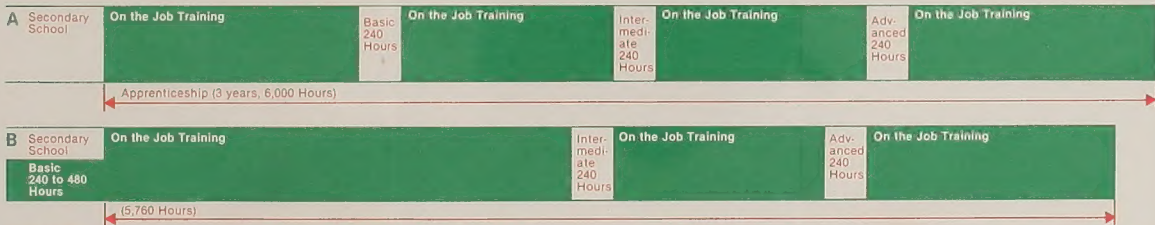
- 1) Linkage provides career-oriented education which better equips them to obtain training positions for career employment; therefore, it may encourage continued school attendance.
- 2) Because the curriculum standards are developed in conjunction with industry,
 - the skills which students acquire are the very skills industry demands;
 - the secondary and community college curricula will be more closely integrated, smoothing the transition from system to system;
 - secondary school curricula will be better integrated with on-the-job learning.
- 3) Linkage enables the student to see technical education, not just as an end in itself, but as the first phase of a long-term process leading towards provincial certification in a skilled occupation.

There are some unique features of the Linkage program.

- 1) **Curriculum:** The curriculum documents, called training profiles, utilize the principles of competency-based education, requiring the student to demonstrate the appropriate behaviour. Because it is competency-based, a student can proceed at his or her own pace towards the achievement of competencies. The training profiles have been developed with the assistance of industry, labour and management.

Existing secondary school curriculum must be consistent with a training profile before a school can participate in Linkage. In most cases, the integration is not difficult as most secondary school programs are generally consistent with the training profiles.

- 2) **Training Profile:** The training profile consists of a number of terminal performance objectives (TPO). For each TPO, there are enabling objectives and terminal performance criteria. A number of TPO's are grouped into a unit on a particular topic. Some units in the General Machinist profile are: Safety, Blueprints II and Sketching, Layout Operations, etc. A number of units are, in turn, grouped in a block. Each block can generally be accomplished in a two-credit course leading to the Secondary School Gradua-



tion Diploma (SSGD). The completion of the required number of blocks will exempt the student from the Basic term at the College of Applied Arts and Technology. The exemption is arranged through the apprenticeship counsellor when the student becomes an apprentice.

- 3) **Student Training Record Book:** The achievement of terminal performance objectives is recorded by the instructor in the Student Record Book which is a valuable asset to the student when seeking employment as an apprentice.
- 4) **Evaluation:** As the student demonstrates the required performance level for each TPO, the instructor certifies this achievement in the Student Training Record Book.
- 5) **Co-operative Education:** In some cases, schools are not equipped to teach one or more units of the training profile. Many schools arrange for these units to be taught in a workplace, through a co-operative education program.
- 6) **Credits:** Participation in Linkage enables the student to obtain both credits towards the SSGD, and credits toward exemption from some of the in-college training.
- 7) **Academic Prerequisites:** Most skilled occupations require communication and computational competencies. Therefore, students, with good psycho-motor ability, but poor performance in English and mathematics, may have difficulty achieving success in a skilled occupation. The school is responsible for identifying the mathematics and communications items that are relevant to the technical content. This information should be transmitted to the teachers and guidance counsellors so that individual students can be assisted in choosing the most appropriate Linkage program.
- 8) **Mixed Classes:** Not all students in a technical course need be registered in Linkage for Linkage to be offered.

- 9) **Scheduling:** To implement Linkage most effectively, double-period shops are recommended.
- 10) **Other Exemptions:** In addition to the exemption from the Basic term of the in-college training, a student may be exempted from some of the on-the-job training. The number of hours of on-the-job training time can be reduced based on the number of technical subjects taken and the number of secondary school years completed. The determination of the training time reduction is negotiated with the employer at the time the student enters apprenticeship.

There is a great deal more to say about Linkage - more than can be contained in a brochure. More information detailing the programs and the registration procedures, is available.

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The Linkage Project

Read about the advantages of the Linkage Project (Training Credit System) and how to implement it in your school.

